



U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom Hearing

Global Efforts to Counter Anti-Semitism

Opening Remarks as prepared for delivery

Gayle Manchin, USCIRF Vice Chair:

Thank you very much, Commissioner Bauer. I would like to join in welcoming you all to today's hearing.

We often hear about the reemergence or “global uptick” in anti-Semitism and how things are looking increasingly grim for the Jewish community, and 2019 was sadly no different.

The attack on the synagogue in Halle, Germany during Yom Kippur, the holiest day in the Jewish calendar, is arguably the most jarring incident of violence against the Jewish community abroad last year. The gunman chose to attack on Yom Kippur knowing that the number of people in the building would be higher than usual. He repeatedly shot at the door's lock and set off an explosive device, but thankfully was unable to breach the building due to enhanced security measures that the synagogue recently installed.

In the United Kingdom, several members of the Labour Party, under the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn, have made numerous anti-Semitic comments and espoused conspiracy theories within its ranks, to the extent that at least seven members of parliament felt compelled to leave the party. In February 2019, Nazi symbols adorned 80 graves at a Jewish cemetery in eastern France. In Italy, police are assigned to around-the-clock guarding of an 89-year-old woman who is both a Holocaust survivor and a senator in the Italian Parliament after she proposed a national commission to battle hatred and bigotry.

While a significant number of the incidents we hear about in the news occur in Europe, this truly is a global phenomenon. In Argentina, vandals desecrated a Jewish cemetery with Nazi symbols

in February and, in a separate occurrence in June, three youth shouted anti-Semitic insults at an Argentinian rabbi, hit and kicked him in the head and abdomen, threw him to the floor, and trampled his hat before fleeing. In Kenya, intruders attacked a rabbi and his wife during a robbery at a Jewish community center in April. They hurled anti-Semitic insults at them and stole computers, passports, food and religious items from the center. In Saudi Arabia, textbooks espousing vile stereotypes and hatred against Jews continue to be used in schools all over the country. And in Australia, authorities recorded at least two incidents in 2019 of Nazi graffiti aimed at intimidating the Jewish community there. As you can see from these handful of examples, unfortunately the scourge of anti-Semitism is alive and well in its varied and wide-ranging forms and manifestations.

I look forward to hearing recommendations from our witnesses on how the United States government can better address the rise in anti-Semitism around the world and how the international community can more effectively ensure that the global Jewish community can worship freely and without fear. Thank you.

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